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Anarchy

by MANUEL GONZALES PRADA

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What Is Anarchy?

IF we were to ask some person for a serious reply to the question, "What is Anarchy?" he would recite to us this catechism: "Anarchy is social dislocation, the state of permanent warfare, the regression of mankind to a state of primitive barbarism." He would also call the Anarchist a sworn enemy of other people's lives and property... A widespread notion is that the Anarchist ideal could be summed up as doing evil for the pleasure of it.

But to maintain in political or religious discussions that our opponent is an imbecile or a villain, is only to say that our opponent does not think as we do.

Anarchy and Anarchist really mean the exact opposite of what their detractors pretend, and we could accurately define the Anarchists' ideal as— unlimited freedom and the highest possible well-being of the individual with the abolition of the State.

The Anarchist rejects all authority or domination, no matter what the form, including that most absurd kind of all, domination by the people. The Anarchist rejects laws, religions, nationalities; and recognizes one power only: that of the individual. Authority leads to abuse, obedience implies subjugation, for the truly emancipated human being does not strive to dominate anyone else, and accepts no other authority than that of oneself over oneself.

Church and State

It is not the worker alone who suffers the iniquity of the laws; we are all, to a greater or lesser degree mocked and exploited— we all find ourselves caught by the immense octopus of the State. Excluding that swarm of parasites who are immersed in opulence and savor today with no concern for tomorrow, the great mass of people fights almost without hope to cover their own nakedness and to conquer hunger. Being a mixture of humanity in its infancy as well as its old age, this mass creeps like a child and wanders like an old person, always a slave to the two great oppressors: religion and government.

Now, Anarchists would certainly not mind if the members of various religions contented themselves with believing in their dogmas, practicing their worship, or preaching their doctrines. But many sects (notably the Catholic) depart from this ideal. They insist upon creating an alloy of politics and religion, and they struggle to instal themselves as the exclusive fount of power. The Roman Catholic priest is in fact the incarnation of this principle of authority; he allies himself forever with the moneyed interests and the military in the hope of eventually supplanting these, or taking control. Not satisfied with ruling, he dreams of empire. Thus, in many countries, the Anarchist is forced to become an irreligious polemicist and an aggressive anticleric.

Read "defensive" here, though, because the real aggression springs originally from the clergy. While the philosopher and the revolutionist sleep, the priest is awake. Thinking himself the doer of some divine work, and imagining that he has a monopoly on truth, he would suppress industry, art, science, in order to impose on the world the tyranny of his dogmatic superstitions. The priest's mind has no other illumination besides the dark fire of fanaticism.

Politics is a solidly organized religion, having as its fetish the State, as its dogmas the constitutions, as its liturgy the rules and statutes, as its priesthood the office-holders, as its faithful the mob of citizenry.

Spencer noted that yesterday's great political superstition, that of the divine right of kings, has yielded to the widespread superstition of our own times: the divine right of legislatures.

Given the normal inclination of people toward abusing power, every government is bad and all authority signifies tyranny, just as each law translates itself into a sanction for continued abuses. Combatting forms of government, authorities and laws, emerging to dissolve political force, the libertarian paves the road for eventual revolution.

When one says Anarchy, one says revolution. And no doubt about it, nothing would be so good as a rapid, world-wide revolution to in a single day, without spilling blood or causing tremendous devastation, effect the removal of government and thereby bring about Anarchy. Still, there are two revolutions, one in the area of deeds, with blood and violence, and another, more important, concerned with ideas.

One must first make oneself whole, and educate oneself, to stay free of the two equally abominable plagues, the habit of obeying and the desire to command. From the souls of slaves or authoritarians arises only slavery or tyranny.

It will be in this, the revolution of ideas, that we will realize the true revolution and the new social order.

In former times it was thought that there could be no morality without religion; today no one believes there can be order without laws, the individual without authority, the wild beast without its keeper.

Today there is a plethora of laws; the individual no longer stands as absolute master of himself, but rather is a slave to social and political circumstance. Often one's special pigeonhole is marked out practically from birth, and there one stays without hope of escape.

The growth of military power nearly always coincides with the diminution of civil liberties. Beyond defending "national boundaries" of "the honor of the flag", governments devise armies to contain or prevent revolutions, and these armies integrate themselves into the structure of power in the name of "the public good", a phrase used by every dictator, and especially today by the grotesque president when his hands grow red with the blood of students and workers.

How sick we would all feel were we only to know the number of crimes symbolized by a president's ornamentation, by the bishop's miter, the policeman's badge, and the emblems of the militarist! In truth, the State is itself chaos.

It should be remembered that Socialism in all its multiple forms, is a restricting oppressor, vastly opposed to Anarchy, which is a condition of complete freedom rejecting regimentation or submission to majoritarian laws. Between Communism and Anarchism, there can now and then occur convergent directions of action, or brief alliances for immediate ends, but never a lasting concordance or fusion of principles.

When the Communists speak of equality or well being for everyone, remember Chauvin's words; "The first act of Social Democrats on our triumphant day should be to shoot every Anarchist..."

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Far removed from that communism which, whatever its form, is a type of enslavement, we discern our distant summit— ANARCHY!

The Anarchist revolutionary salutes the future, tomorrow's advent of an era of liberation for all the oppressed; an era of fraternity among all races and people. #